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IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

Carmen FIGUEROA OTERO and)	
Alberto OTERO,)	Case No. 4:16-cv-00090-CKJ
Plaintiffs)	
v.)))	PLAINTIFF'S SECOND AMENDED COMPLAINT
JEH JOHNSON, Secretary for the)	
Department of Homeland Security;)	
LEON RODRIGUEZ, Director for the)	
United States Citizenship and)	
Immigration Services ("CIS");)	(HONORABLE CINDY K. JORGENSON)
AL GALLMANN, District)	
Director for the Phoenix CIS, Julie)	
Hashimoto, Director for the Tucson Field)	
Office of CIS)	
Defendants)	
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COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

COMES NOW Carmen Figueroa Otero (previously known as Carmen Castaneda Otero), by and through counsel undersigned, and timely files this Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief in accordance with Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 8(a), 57, and 65. Ms. Figueroa applied for the affirmative immigration benefit of adjustment to permanent resident status and was denied. As this denial was erroneously based on an *unknowing* false claim to

1	U.S. citizenship, Ms. Figueroa brings this declaratory and injunctive action to compe
2	Defendants to reconsider her adjustment of status application and grant her status as
3	permanent resident.
4	I. BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF CASE AND FACTS
5	1. Carmen Figueroa Otero is a forty-five-year-old citizen of Mexico who resides in Marana
6	Arizona.
7	2. Alberto Otero is Ms. Figueroa Otero's U.S. citizen husband and a technical sergeant in the
8	United States Air Force.
9	3. Ms. Figueroa has lived in the United States nearly all of her life.
10	4. When Ms. Figueroa was growing up, her mother told her she was a U.S. citizen becaus
11	she had been born in Texas.
12 13	5. Ms. Figueroa was permitted to enroll in public schools in the U.S., was issued a delaye
14	U.S. birth certificate, and obtained a U.S. passport, based on her mother's account of he
15	citizenship and birth location.
16	6. Ms. Figueroa also honorably served for ten years as a law enforcement officer for the
17	Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), a position that requires U.S. citizenship.
18	7. Throughout her youth and adulthood, Ms. Figueroa would take casual trips to Mexic
19	using her U.S. forms of identification and crossing the border as a U.S. citizen.
20	8. The most recent of these trips was in or around May of 2013, when she crossed with he
21	passport.
22	9. Each time Ms. Figueroa presented herself and her identification to government officials
23	she believed in good faith that she was a U.S. citizen.
24	10. However, shortly after her May 2013 trip, Ms. Figueroa's brother was suddenly denied
25	

- she is unable to provide USCIS with a copy of her passport, or any pages therein, because Special Agents from the U.S. Department of State revoked Ms. Figueroa Otero's passport on or about September 20, 2013."
- 19. Ms. Figueroa Otero also advised Defendants, in undersigned counsel's correspondence of April 14, 2014, that she was "prepared to answer any questions about the circumstances of her last entry, after inspection, on her then-valid U.S. passport, at the time of her interview at the USCIS Tucson Field Office."
- 20. On May 15, 2014, Defendants issued a Request for Applicant to Appear for Initial Interview, and scheduled Ms. Figueroa Otero's adjustment of status interview for Monday, June 23, 2014.
- 21. On June 5, 2014, undersigned counsel corresponded with then Acting Field Office Director Juan Guerra, requesting that USCIS make arrangements to have Plaintiff's adjustment of status interview recorded. See Exhibit D, Letter from Matthew Green to Juan Guerra, June 5, 2014. In that letter, undersigned counsel explained that Plaintiff was the subject of a criminal investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the U.S. Department of State. Specifically, the investigation concerned whether probable cause existed to believe whether Ms. Figueroa Otero had violated any federal criminal laws in obtaining her U.S. passport or presenting her U.S. passport for admission into the United States.
- 22. Over the next several months, Mr. Guerra and undersigned counsel continued to correspond via electronic mail (email) on the subject of whether Defendants would accommodate Ms. Figueroa Otero's request to have her interview recorded. Ultimately, Ms. Figueroa Otero's adjustment of status interview was rescheduled for January 29, 2015.

- 23. On January 29, 2015, USCIS Officer John Nelson conducted Ms. Figueroa Otero's adjustment of status interview at the Tucson Field Office. The interview lasted for over an hour, and Mr. Nelson extensively questioned Ms. Figueroa Otero about her past, including her childhood. He also questioned Ms. Figueroa Otero specifically about the circumstances of how she discovered the truth about her alienage.
 24. Several minutes into the interview, the adjudicator, Mr. Nelson, first acknowledged that he
 - 24. Several minutes into the interview, the adjudicator, Mr. Nelson, first acknowledged that he was familiar with the extraordinary, and well-publicized, facts of Ms. Figueroa Otero's case, when he confirms that Ms. Figueroa Otero was previously employed as a police officer with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). Officer Nelson stated that "there's a whole mess going on, and we're going to try to get that squared away now; right?"
 - 25. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Nelson started questioning Ms. Figueroa Otero about the circumstances surrounding her acquisition of the delayed U.S. birth certificate that she presented to DPS when applying for her job as a police officer. For the next twenty minutes, Officer Nelson embarked on a thorough exploration of Ms. Figueroa Otero's past. The *only* relevance these questions could arguably have had to the adjustment interview is to determine whether or not Ms. Figueroa Otero reasonably knew or should have known that she was a U.S. citizen prior to the events that led to the revocation of her U.S. passport in 2013.
 - 26. About five minutes later, Mr. Nelson began questioning Ms. Figueroa Otero again about the same subjects. Officer Nelson gave it a final attempt one hour and four minutes into the recording, and his questions were even more highly focused on the issue of potential false claim at that point.

1	27. At the end of the interview, Mr. Nelson acknowledged the potential finding of a false
2	claim to U.S. citizenship as a ground of inadmissibility when he stated "we're probably
3	going to still have issues with adjustment"
4	
5	28. <u>Upon returning to his office from the adjustment of status interview on January 29, 2015,</u>
6	undersigned counsel wrote a letter to Mr. Nelson, thoroughly explaining why, under the
7	relevant immigration law, Ms. Figueroa Otero is not inadmissible for having made a
8	knowing false claim to U.S. citizenship.
9	29. On September 28, 2015, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"), CIS,
10	Tucson Field Office denied Ms. Figueroa's Figueroa-Otero's application.
11	30. The Tucson Field Office is under the direct supervision and control of Defendant Julie
12	Hashimoto.
13	31. The Tucson Field Office is an agent of the other Defendants named in this suit
14	32. The Tucson Field Office stated that it was denying the application because Ms. Figueroa
15	Otero had not been "inspected and admitted or paroled into the United States," because she
16	had used her improperly-issued U.S. passport to gain entry into the country as a U.S.
17	citizen in May 2013.
18 19	33. The Tucson Field Office did not allege or conclude that Ms. Figueroa Otero had
20	fraudulently used her passport or claimed U.S. citizenship in a knowingly false manner.
21	34. The Tucson Field Office grounded its denial solely on the fact that Ms. Figueroa Otero
22	was not actually entitled to be inspected and admitted as a citizen in May 2013, regardless
23	
24	of her good faith.
25	35. This denial has no basis in the law.
23	36. To conceal its lack of legal footing, the Tucson Field Office changed a lengthy block

1	quotation from a precedential case to make it seem like the case supports its decision.
2	37. The changed quote made up the entirety of the legal analysis in the Tucson Field Office's
3	written decision.
4	38. The changed quote came from <i>Matter of Pinzon</i> , 26 I&N Dec. 189, 191–92 (BIA 2013)
5	but was altered with one additional phrase and another redacted phrase, in order to give i
6	the opposite meaning from what <i>Pinzon</i> and its predecessors had held
7	39. In its written decision, the Tucson Field Office pulled its entire legal analysis directly from
8	the <i>Pinzon</i> case.
9	40. The Tucson Field Office did not include a citation to <i>Pinzon</i> , making it more difficult to
10	discover the text had been copied and pasted, as well as critically altered.
11	41. After receiving the denial, Ms. Figueroa Otero timely urged the Tucson Field Office to
12	reconsider its denial and pointed out the adulterated quotation of <i>Pinzon</i> , by filing a Form
13	I-290B, Motion to Reconsider.
14 15	42. Ms. Figueroa Otero further explained that the Tucson Field Office's reasoning was
16	contrary to more than fifty years of binding precedent from the Board of Immigration
17	Appeals (BIA) and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.
18	43. On December18, 2015, the Tucson Field Office nevertheless declined to reopen of
19	reconsider its denial of Ms. Figueroa's Figueroa-Otero's adjustment of status application.
20	44. In the December 18th denial, the Tucson Field Office again refused to cite to <i>Pinzon</i> , and
21	listed only the cases cited therein as forming the basis for its conclusion; it listed these
22	cited cases without analyzing their holdings.
23	45. Had the Tucson Field Office analyzed these cases' holdings, it would have seen that
24	binding precedent deems an entry using a <i>good faith</i> claim to citizenship to be an
25	omaing precedent deems an endy using a good jaun claim to cluzenship to be at

inspection and admission for purposes of an adjustment of status application. See *Matter of Quinlantan*, 25 I&N Dec. 285, 290 (BIA 2010) ("[A]n alien who had physically presented herself for questioning and made no *knowing* false claim of citizenship had satisfied the 'inspected and admitted' requirement of section 245(a) of the [Immigration and Nationality] Act') (emphasis added), *Matter of F-*, 9 I&N Dec. 54, 56 (9 Reg'l Comm'r, Ass't Comm'r 1960) ("[W]here a person presented himself to an immigrant inspector and stated that he was a citizen of the United States, honestly believing this to be the truth, that person did not enter without inspection"). See also *Matter of Wong*, 12 I&N Dec. 733, 734 (BIA 1968) (refusing to dissolve the distinction between good-faith and bad-faith claims to citizenship and holding that "an alien who honestly believed that he was a citizen and appeared before an immigrant inspector can properly be considered to have been inspected within the meaning of the immigration laws").

- 46. The *only* reason the Tucson Field Office gave for denying Ms. Figueroa's Figueroa Otero's adjustment of status application was that her unwittingly inaccurate claim to U.S. citizenship prevented her from being inspected and admitted under the immigration laws.
- 47. Indeed, because the Tucson Field Office refused to follow binding precedent on its sole ground for denial, Ms. Figueroa Otero was wrongfully prevented from adjusting her status to that of a lawful permanent resident in this country.
- 48. In a letter dated June 15, 2016, Defendant Julie Hashimoto advised Ms. Figueroa Otero that it had rendered a decision "on the Service Motion concerning USCIS Denial Notice, dated December 18, 2015."
- 49. The USCIS decision itself indicates that Plaintiff USCIS, in one fell swoop, 1) made what is essentially a sua sponte motion to reopen Ms. Figueroa Otero's I-485 application for

- adjustment of status, 2) proceeded to consider its own motion without any notice to or input from Ms. Figueroa Otero, and 3) subsequently granted its own motion.
- 50. In the discussion section of the June 15, 2016 decision and order, Defendants state that "[o]n December 18, 2015, USCIS denied your Form I-485, citing that you were not inspected and admitted or paroled. USCIS established that because you were unable to show that you were inspected and admitted or paroled, or that you were exempt from that requirement, you were ineligible as a matter of law to adjust status in the United States."
- 51. Defendants further write that "[t]he denial stated that as a result of your entry under a false claim to United States citizenship using a United States passport, your entry did not constitute an admission as defined in INA [§] 101 (a)(13)(A). However, USCIS failed to establish at the time of your interview whether your false claim to United States citizenship was made knowingly." Id.
- 52. The agency then concludes that, "[i]n view of the foregoing and all evidence of record, USCIS moves to grant the Service Motion to Reopen under 8 CFR [§] 103(a)(5) based on the failure to establish whether your false claim to United States citizenship was made knowingly," and proceeded to order "that the motion be granted and the I-485 application be returned to a pending status." Id.
- 53. On June 17, 2016, Defendants filed their motion to dismiss, in which they claim that, "[s]ince USCIS has withdrawn its denial of Plaintiff's I-485 and reopened the application for reconsideration, there is no final agency action for the Court to review." "Defendants ask this Court to find that Plaintiff's action is moot, and should be dismissed for lack of subject matter jurisdiction." Id.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1	54. Ms. Figueroa Otero alleges that Defendants, by and through their agent, the Tucson Field
2	Office of CIS, violated INA § 245, 8 U.S.C. § 1255, and the case law that interprets it.
3	55. "A person suffering a legal wrong because of agency action, or adversely affected or
4	aggrieved by agency action within the meaning of a relevant statute, is entitled to judicial
5	review thereof." Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 702 (2015).
6	56. This Court also has original jurisdiction because this is a civil action that "aris[es] under
7	the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States." 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
8	57. This Court has jurisdiction to grant the requested relief under the Declaratory Judgment
9	Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201–02, which gives it the authority to "declare the rights and other
10	legal relations of any interested party seeking such declaration" and grant "[f]urther
11	necessary or proper relief based on [that] declaratory judgment or decree." Id.
12	58. This Court has further authority to "compel agency action unlawfully withheld" and "hold
13 14	unlawful and set aside agency action, findings, and conclusions found to be not in
15	accordance with law" under the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 706(1) &
16	(2)(A).
17	59. Venue is proper in the District of Arizona because it is the "judicial district in which a
18	substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred." 28 U.S.C. §
19	1391(b)(2).
20	III. CAUSES OF ACTION
21	Count One
22	Administrative Procedure Act
23	60. Ms. Figueroa Otero re-alleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 35 49
24	above.
25	61 Defendants' decisions denving Ms. Figueroa Otero's adjustment of status were not in

1	accordance with law because they were based solely on her good-faith claim to citizenship
2	at her last border crossing, and a good-faith claim to citizenship is not a ground for denying
3	adjustment of status. See Matter of Quinlantan, 25 I&N Dec. at 290; Matter of F-, 9 I&N
4	Dec. at 56; Matter of Wong, 12 I&N Dec. at 734.
5	62. Because the only basis identified for the denial was contrary to law, Ms. Figueroa Otero
6	should have been permitted to adjust her status and Defendants' agent's refusal of this
7	permission constituted agency action wrongfully withheld. See INA § 245, 8 U.S.C. §
8	1255.
9	63. Under the Administrative Procedure Act, decisions that are not in accordance with law
10	should be set aside, and agency action that is wrongfully refused should be compelled. 5
11	U.S.C. §§ 706(1) & (2)(A).
12	Count Two
13 14	Administrative Procedure Act
15	64. Ms. Figueroa Otero re-alleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 38 49
16	above.
17	65. Defendants further wrongfully withheld agency action and abused its discretion when it
18	refused to reopen or reconsider its denial of Ms. Figueroa's <u>Figueroa Otero's</u> adjustment of
19	status application upon good cause shown. See 8 C.F.R. § 103.5.
20	66. Under the Administrative Procedure Act, agency action that was wrongfully withheld
21	should be compelled and a decision constituting an abuse of an agency's discretion should
22	be set aside. 5 U.S.C. §§ 702(1) & (2)(A).
23	Count Three
24	Due Process and Equal Protection under the U.S. Constitution
25	

1	67. Ms. Figueroa re-alleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 42 49 above.
2	68. Defendants' agent's decisions denying Ms. Figueroa's Figueroa-Otero's adjustment of
3	status application on a single erroneous ground violated her due process and equal
4	protection rights, which are guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment of the United States
5	Constitution.
6 7	<u>Count Four</u> <u>Declaratory Judgment Act</u>
8	69. Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference paragraphs 1 through 53, and paragraph
9	57 above.
10	70. Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a), "[w]hen a Service officer, on his or her own motion.
11	reopens a Service proceeding or reconsiders a Service decision, and the new decision may
12	be unfavorable to the affected party, the officer shall give the affected party 30 days after
13	the service of the motion to submit a brief."
14	71. 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(5)(ii) required Defendants to first make a motion, then serve it on Ms
15	Figueroa Otero. The applicable regulation then required Defendants to wait 30 days to
16	allow Ms. Figueroa Otero to respond to the motion by submitting a brief. No action was
17	allowed to be taken on the agency's motion until either a) the expiration of the 30 day
18 19	response period, or b) the affected party provided notice that she was waiving the 30 day
20	response period.
21	72. Therefore, as a matter of law, Defendants violated Ms. Figueroa Otero's right to be served
22	with the agency's motion, to file a brief in opposition of the agency's motion, and to have
23	the agency consider Plaintiff's brief prior to making a decision on the motion.
24	73. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that, as a matter of law, in granting their
25	own motion to reopen Ms. Figueroa Otero's case without allowing her the opportunity to

respond by	y filing	a	brief	within	30	days,	Defendants'	acted	without	authority	and	in
•										-		
violation o	of federal	l 1a	ıw.									

- 74. <u>Plaintiffs are also entitled to preliminary and permanent injunctions enjoining Defendants</u> from proceeding with any further action on Ms. Figueroa-Otero's case unless and until they permit her to file, and consider, a brief in opposition to the agency's decision to reopen her adjustment of status proceedings.
- 75. For the reason set forth above, Plaintiffs do not have an adequate remedy at law, they have a likelihood of success on the merits at trial, they have a protectable right to due process of law as prescribed by 8 C.F.R. §103.5(a)(ii), they would be irreparably harmed if Defendants are not preliminarily enjoined from proceeding with their attempts to gather further information through re-interviewing Ms. Figueroa Otero, and the benefit of such a preliminary injunction to Plaintiffs outweighs any burden on Defendants.

Count Five Mandamus

- 76. <u>Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference paragraphs 1 through 53, 57, and 70 through 72, above.</u>
- 77. The Mandamus Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1361, provides that district courts shall have jurisdiction over any action in the nature of mandamus, and may compel an officer or employee of the United States or any agency thereof to perform a duty owed to the plaintiff. Plaintiff must demonstrate that "(1) [his or her] claim is clear and certain; (2) the official's duty is nondiscretionary, ministerial, and so plainly prescribed as to be free from doubt; and (3) no other adequate remedy is available." *Patel v. Reno*, 134 F.3d 929, 931 (9th Cir. 1997).
- 78. Plaintiffs' claims as set forth above qualify for mandamus relief because the statutory and constitutional claims are clear, the defendants' duties are not in doubt, and in the case of any remedies not available under the APA, no other adequate remedy is available.

<u>Count Six</u> <u>Fifth Amendment Due Process Clause</u>

- 79. <u>Plaintiffs re-allege and incorporate by reference paragraphs 1 through 53, 57, and 70 through 72, above.</u>
- 80. The initial denial of her application, and the subsequent denial of her motion to reconsider, constituted due process violations arising from purely legal, nondiscretionary obligations owed to Ms. Figueroa-Otero, and therefore violated her due process rights.
- 81. Moreover, the allegations set forth above establish that Defendants had more than adequate opportunity to develop the administrative record, and it has sufficiently done so. Subjecting Ms. Figueroa Otero to another interview on the subject of whether she made a knowing false claim to citizenship would transform questioning into interrogation, and would change the nature of the administrative proceedings from non-adversarial to adversarial, which is prohibited. See, e.g., USCIS Adjudicator's Field Manual ("AFM"), Chapter 15.1(a) (2014) ("Interviews conducted by adjudication officers are non-adversarial in nature, as opposed to a court proceeding involving two attorneys where each advocates a particular position."); see also id., Chapter 15.4(a) ("Interview proceedings are not to be adversarial in nature. The purpose of the interview is to obtain the correct information in order to make the correct adjudication of the case, not to prove a particular point or to find a reason to deny the benefit sought. The purpose is to cover (and discover) all the pertinent information, both favorable and unfavorable to the applicant.)." (Emphasis added).
- 82. Defendants' actions on June 15, 2016 violated the Due Process Clause. Not only did Defendants violate their own regulations in depriving Ms. Figueroa Otero of the right to respond to the USCIS motion to reopen, but Defendants also sought to do so for purposes expressly prohibited by their policies and procedures as set forth in the AFM. "The legal

proposition that agencies may be required to abide by certain internal polices is well-established. As the Supreme Court has stated: "Where the rights of individuals are affected, it is incumbent upon agencies to follow their own procedures." *Alcaraz v. INS*, 384 F.3d 1150, 1162 (9th Cir. 2004) (*quoting Morton v. Ruiz*, 415 U.S. at 235). "This is so even where the internal procedures are possibly more rigorous than otherwise would be required." *Id*.

83. As a proximate result of Defendants' unconstitutional actions in failing to follow their own regulations and procedures, Plaintiffs are suffering and will continue to suffer a significant deprivation of their liberty and property interests without due process of law. Plaintiffs have no plain, adequate or complete remedy at law to address the wrongs described herein. The injunctive and declaratory relief sought by Plaintiffs is necessary to prevent continued and future injury.

IV. DEMAND FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Ms. Figueroa Otero and Mr. Otero respectfully request that this Court:

- A. Reverse Defendants' agent's decision not to reopen or reconsider its denial of Ms. Figueroa's adjustment of status application Set aside USCIS' flawed findings of fact and conclusions of law;
- B. Order Defendants, through the Tucson Field Office, to grant Ms. Figueroa's adjustment of status application Order the matter remanded to USCIS for readjudication of Plaintiff's adjustment of status application consistent with this Court's findings and orders;
- C. In the alternative, to issue a judgment declaring that Defendants' violated Ms. Figuero

 Otero's due process rights under the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by failing
 to allow her to issue a brief in opposition to Defendants' motion to reopen her proceedings,

1		when such reopening may result in an adverse decision against Ms. Figueroa Otero;
2	D.	Temporarily enjoin the Defendants from taking any further action on Ms. Figueroa Otero's
3		case unless and until they have allowed her to submit a brief in opposition to the reopening
4		of her case, and to subsequently consider the merits of such a brief;
5	E.	Issue a judgment and/or writ of mandamus, ordering Defendants to allow Ms. Figueroa
6		Otero to submit a brief in opposition to the reopening of her case, and to subsequently
7		consider the merits of such a brief;
8	F.	Permanently enjoin Defendants from conducting a subsequent interview of Ms. Figueroa
9		Otero to the extent that it seeks to elicit any additional information about whether she
10		made a knowingly false claim to U.S. citizenship, in that such action by Defendants would
11		violate their own internal procedures, and as a result, the due process rights of Ms.
12		Figueroa Otero;
13	G.	Retain jurisdiction during the adjudication of the adjustment of status application in order
14 15		to ensure compliance with the Court's orders;
16	Н.	Award reasonable costs and attorneys' fees; and
17	I.	Grant such other relief as the Court may deem just and proper.
18		RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 10th day of November, 2016
19		I AW OFFICES OF MATCHEW II COFFEN
20		LAW OFFICES OF MATTHEW H. GREEN
21		_ <u>s/Matthew H. Green</u> Matthew H. Green
22		Attorney for the Respondent 130 West Cushing Street
23		Tucson, Arizona 85701 (520) 882-8852
24		
25		

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE I hereby certify that on this 10th day of November, 2016, I electronically transmitted the attached document to the Clerk's Office using the CM/ECF System for filing and transmittal of Notice of Electronic Filing to the following CM/ECF registrant(s): Katherine R. Branch Assistant U.S. Attorney Two Renaissance Square 40 North Central Avenue, Suite 1200 Phoenix, Arizona 85004-4408 Katherine.Branch@usdoj.gov Attorney for Defendants